

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 NSCE-00 IO-14 SAM-01 EB-11

COME-00 TRSE-00 INT-08 FEA-02 AID-20 DRC-01 SSO-00

INRE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

OMB-01 DLOS-07 ACDA-19 COA-02 /186 W
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O R 091141Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7644

AMEMBASSY SAIGON IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 12091

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, VS, CB, ENRG

SUBJECT UPI REPORT ALLEGES GVN PLANS FOR MILITARY ACTION
AGAINST OIL RIG

REF: PHNOM PENH 12085

1. ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER HOU HONG TELEPHONED CHARGE IN SOME
AGITATION AFTERNOON SEPTEMBER 9 TO ASK IF EMBASSY HAD ANY
INFORMATION TO CONFIRM OR REFUTE UPI REPORT JUST RECEIVED BY
FOREIGN MINISTRY TO EFFECT THAT PRESIDENT THIEU HAD ORDERED
PREPARATIONS FOR MILITARY ACTION AGAINST ELF OIL RIG IN CASE
GKR DID NOT COMPLY WITH GVN ULTIMATUM WITHIN DEADLINE. HOU
HONG SAID UPI CABLE (APPARENTLY FILED FROM SAIGON) REPORTED
THAT ACCORDING "DIPLOMATIC SOURCES" THERE THIEU HAD MET ON
FRIDAY WITH MILITARY CHIEFS TO PLAN NAVAL AND AIR ACTION TO
REMOVE THE RIG. AT SAME TIME PRESIDENT THIEU HAD ORDERED
FOREIGN MINISTRY TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS WITH GKR
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TOWARD A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION ON DELIMITATION OF TWO

COUNTRIES' TERRITORIAL WATERS. UPI ALSO REPORTED THAT ELF HAD STATED THAT THE RIG WOULD BE MOVED BY TUESDAY (TOMORROW). UPI IN ADDITION QUOTED "GOVERNMENT SOURCES" IN SAIGON AS SAYING THAT FOUR DESTROYER ESCORTS WERE EN ROUTE TO AREA WHERE RIG NOW IS AND HAD RECEIVED ORDERS TO KEEP THEIR DISTANCE FROM THE DRILLING PLATFORM AND THE ISLAND FOR THE PRESENT.

2. CHARGE SAID WE WOULD CHECK WITH SAIGON TO SEE IF THERE WAS ANYTHING TO THIS REPORT, BUT HE THOUGHT IT WAS MOST LIKELY A TYPICAL PERFORMANCE BY UPI OF FILING FIRST AND CHECKING LATER. CHARGE NOTED THAT WE HAD ALREADY HAD TROUBLE WITH UPI REPORTING ON THIS AFFAIR. CHARGE SUGGESTED GKR NOT REACT UNTIL WE COULD CHECK OUT THE UPI REPORT.

3. HOU HONG SAID THAT YESTERDAY FRENCH CHARGE PAVEK HAD CALLED AT FOREIGN MINISTRY AND HAD INFORMED THEM HE HAD RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM PARIS TO OFFER GOOD OFFICES OF FRENCH GOVERNMENT TO RESOLVE THIS DISPUTE. PAVEC ASKED IF GKR WOULD HAVE ANY OBJECTION TO A FRENCH INVOLVEMENT. GKR FOREIGN MINISTRY RESPONDED THAT IT HAD NO OBJECTION, BELIEVED FRENCH OUGHT TO PLAY A ROLE SINCE ELF WAS A FRENCH COMPANY, BUT WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT THE FRENCH PROPOSED AS A SOLUTION. GKR NOTED THAT IT WISHED A PEACEFUL SOLUTION THAT WOULD NOT CAUSE GKR TO "LOSE FACE."

4. PAVEC STATED THAT ELF PLANNED TO TERMINATE OPERATIONS AT THE PRESENT SITE BY SEPTEMBER 17, THAT IS, FIVE DAYS AFTER THE GVN DEADLINE, AS THE DRILLING AT THAT LOCATION WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETED BY THEN. THE RIG WOULD THEN BE MOVED. HOU HONG SAID IT WAS THE GKR'S POSITION THAT THIS WOULD BE ALL RIGHT SO LONG AS THE RIG WAS MOVED "A L'INTERIEUR" (I.E., FARTHER NORTH) TO AREA WHERE THERE WAS NO DISPUTE ABOUT ITS BEING IN KHMER WATERS.

5. COMMENT: HOU HONG DID NOT INDICATE PAVEC'S RESPONSE OR ELF'S PLANS ON THE LATTER POINT, BUT CHARGE
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RECEIVED IMPRESSION THAT IF ELF REMOVED RIG ENTIRELY FROM GKR WATERS, GKR WOULD CONSIDER THAT THIS AMOUNTED TO A SURRENDER TO GVN ULTIMATUM AND THEREFORE WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE. EMBASSY SUGGESTS WE ALLOW FRENCH TO CARRY THE BALL ON THIS ONE FOR THE MOMENT.

6. ACTION REQUEST: WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF EMBASSY SAIGON COULD PROVIDE INFORMATION WE COULD PASS TO GKR

THAT WOULD REASSURE THEM REGARDING UPI REPORT OF GVN
MILITARY PLANNING OR PREPARATIONS.
KEELEY

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, PETROLEUM, DISPUTES, TERRITORIAL CLAIMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: kelleyw0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974PHNOM12091
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740250-0024
From: PHNOM PENH
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740961/aaaabzxf.tel
Line Count: 118
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: PHNOM PENH 12085
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kelleyw0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 APR 2002 by rowelle0>; APPROVED <10 MAR 2003 by kelleyw0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UPI REPORT ALLEGES GVN PLANS FOR MILITARY ACTION AGAINST OIL RIG
TAGS: PBOR, ENRG, VS, CB
To: STATE SAIGON
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005